

Protocols of the Elders of Zion

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Protocols of the Elders of Zion

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"If ever a piece of writing could produce mass hatred, it is this one. . . . This book is about lies and slander."

—Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

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today, especially on the Internet. The individuals and groups who have used the Protocols are all linked by a common purpose: to spread hatred of Jews.

The Protocols is entirely a work of fiction, intentionally written to blame Jews for a variety of ills. Those who distribute it claim that it documents a Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world. The conspiracy and its alleged leaders, the so-called Elders of Zion, never existed.

The Origin of a Lie

In 1903, portions of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion were serialized in a Russian newspaper, Znamya (The Banner). The version of the Protocols that has endured and has been translated into dozens of languages, however, was first published in Russia in 1905 as an appendix to The Great in the Small: The Coming of the Anti-Christ and the Rule of Satan on Earth, by Russian writer and mystic Sergei Nilus. Although the exact origin of the Protocols is unknown, its intent was to portray Jews as conspirators against the state. In 24 chapters, or protocols, allegedly minutes from meetings of Jewish leaders, the Protocols "describes" the "secret plans" of Jews to rule the world by manipulating the economy, controlling the media, and fostering religious conflict.

Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, anti-Bolshevik émigrés brought the Protocols to the West. Soon after, editions circulated across Europe, the United States, South America, and Japan. An Arabic translation first appeared in the 1920s.

Beginning in 1920, auto magnate Henry Ford's newspaper, The Dearborn Independent, published a series of articles based in part on the Protocols. The International Jew, the book that included this series, was translated into at least 16 languages. Both [Adolf Hitler](#) and Joseph Goebbels, later head of the [propaganda ministry](#), praised Ford and The International Jew.

Fraud Exposed

In 1921, the London Times presented conclusive proof that the Protocols was a "clumsy plagiarism." The Times confirmed that the Protocols had been copied in large part from a French political satire that never mentioned Jews—Maurice Joly's Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu (1864). Other investigations revealed that one chapter of a Prussian novel, Hermann Goedsche's Biarritz (1868), also "inspired" the Protocols.

[The Times, August 17, 1921](#)

The Nazi Era

Nazi Party ideologue [Alfred Rosenberg](#) introduced Hitler to the Protocols during the early 1920s, as Hitler was developing his worldview. Hitler referred to the Protocols in some of his early political speeches, and, throughout his career, he exploited the myth that "Jewish-Bolshevists" were conspiring to control the world.

During the 1920s and 1930s, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion played an important part in the Nazis' [propaganda](#) arsenal. The Nazi party published at least 23 editions of the Protocols between 1919 and 1939. Following the Nazis' [seizure of power](#) in 1933, some schools used the Protocols to [indoctrinate students](#).

Fraud Exposed

In 1935, a Swiss court fined two Nazi leaders for circulating a German-language edition of the Protocols in Berne, Switzerland. The presiding justice at the trial declared the Protocols "libelous," "obvious forgeries," and "ridiculous nonsense."

The US Senate issued a report in 1964 declaring that the Protocols were "fabricated." The Senate called the contents of the Protocols "gibberish" and criticized those who "peddled" the Protocols for using the same propaganda technique as Hitler.

In 1993, a Russian court ruled that Pamyat, a far-right nationalist organization, had committed an antisemitic act by publishing the Protocols.

Despite these repeated exposures of the Protocols as a fraud, it remains the most influential antisemitic text of the past one hundred years, and it continues to appeal to a variety of antisemitic individuals and groups.

The Protocols Today

According to the US Department of State's "Report on Global Anti-Semitism" (2004),

"The clear purpose of the [Protocols is] to incite hatred of Jews and of Israel."

In the United States and Europe, neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and [Holocaust deniers](#) endorse and circulate the Protocols. Books based on the Protocols are available worldwide, even in countries with hardly any Jews such as Japan.

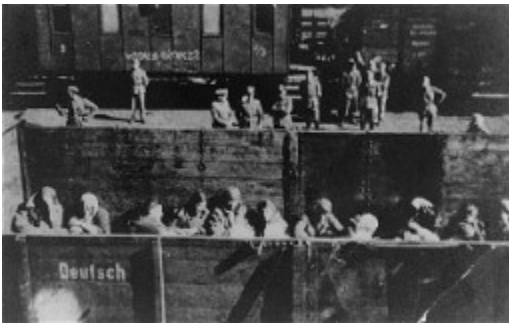
Many school textbooks throughout the Arab and Islamic world teach the Protocols as fact. Countless political speeches, editorials, and even children's cartoons are derived from the Protocols. In 2002, Egypt's government-sponsored television aired a miniseries based on the Protocols, an event condemned by the US State Department. The Palestinian organization Hamas draws in part on the Protocols to justify its terrorism against Israeli civilians.

The Internet has dramatically increased access to the Protocols. Even though many websites expose the Protocols as a fraud, the Internet has made it easy to use the Protocols to spread hatred of Jews. Today, a typical Internet search yields several hundred thousand sites that disseminate, sell, or debate the Protocols or expose them as a fraud. See Also

[Article Protocols of the Elders of Zion: Key Dates](#)



[Article Antisemitism](#)



[Article Victims of the Nazi Era: Nazi Racial Ideology](#)

Critical Thinking Questions

How could the spread of a false story like the Protocols be a warning sign for genocide?

Why do lies and conspiracy theories often exist long after they are proven false?

How can individuals, groups, and governments combat the spread of and ill effects of misinformation?

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UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM

100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW
Washington, DC 20024-2126
Main telephone: 202.488.0400
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